

2000 CENSUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, we have a serious problem in America today that might seem somewhat paranormal. It might be something we would see on "Ripley's Believe it or Not" or maybe "The X Files." Ten million Americans have become invisible. And even more will disappear if this Congress fails to act.

I am talking about the 1990 census. That is when ten million people were not counted, they were simply overlooked. It was as if the population of Michigan or Ohio simply fell off the map. Many of those who were missed are people who most need the things that being counted in the census brings, representation in government and inclusion in government's Federal funding formulas. The 1990 census was the first to be worse than the census before it, and the difference between the undercount for whites and minorities was the worst ever recorded.

About 4½ percent of all African Americans were missed, as were 1 in 20 Latinos, 1 in 14 children, and 1 in 10 black males. But the problem does not end with the undercount. In 1990, over 6 million people were counted more than once and most of them were white. That makes the undercount even more unfair to minorities and poor people, because not only are they missed, but their proportional representation, the basis for House seats and Federal dollars, is further diminished by double-counting.

The 1990 census cost 20 percent more than the 1980 census and was 33 percent less accurate. In fact, unless we make some fundamental changes, there is every reason to believe that the 2000 census will cost even more and be less accurate.

As we enter a new millennium, our Nation needs an accurate census that includes everybody. We cannot be satisfied with the census that continues to miss millions of people. But that is exactly what will happen 2 years from now unless we use the best knowledge and technology available to fix the problems of the past.

There is some good news. Some people have been thinking about this problem already. In 1992, a bipartisan coalition of representatives pushed legislation to ask the National Academy of Sciences to review the census. They chose the National Academy of Sciences because the Academy is fair and independent of political influence.

Using the recommendations from that independent review, the Census Bureau has developed a comprehensive plan for the 2000 census that will produce the most accurate census in our Nation's history. It includes using the latest technology, shorter forms, more ways to respond, a paid advertis-

ing campaign, better address lists, and closer partnerships with both local governments and community-based organizations.

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All of these things will improve the response rate and improve accuracy while containing costs. After extensive efforts to count absolutely everybody, the plan for the 2000 census calls for the application of basic statistical methods to establish the number and characteristics of the people who still do not respond based on those who do.

Congress recently approved a test of these methods in 2 of the 3 dress rehearsals for the census that starts this spring. Under the Census Bureau plan, everybody counts. All Americans will be included in the census. But the bureau faces one obstacle, and that is this Congress. Those who oppose the Census Bureau's plan for the 2000 census say they are willing to spend whatever it takes to count everybody the old way. But everybody knows that no matter how much you spend, the old ways will not count everyone.

Dr. Barbara Bryant stepped into the breach for President Bush to direct the 1990 census. The Republican appointee knew all too well the problems with the plans for 1990. But she was brought on board just 4 months before it was to begin. It takes 24 hours to turn around an aircraft carrier. Four months was hardly enough time to stop the momentum of an operation as massive as the census. Recently Dr. Bryant wrote, and I quote,

Throwing more money and more temporarily hired census takers at the job of enumeration will not find the missing.

She echoes what everybody knows. The old methods are as worn out as the arguments that keep them.

One of those arguments being used by the House Leadership is that we are under a Constitutional mandate to physically count everyone, nose by nose.

That is an impossibility, and it gives the illusion that the census can reach everyone directly, which it cannot and does not. However, it can reach many people directly. And it will—because the current plan calls for the Census Bureau to make an unprecedented effort to count most Americans directly, either through the mail, by telephone, or by going door-to-door to find those people who don't respond.

This is not a "sample census" of "virtual Americans" as some have claimed. In fact, it is the most extensive effort to count everyone in the history of the census.

Every household will receive 4 mailings between the middle of March and the middle of April.

Questionnaires will be available in public places such as libraries, post offices, and churches.

People can even call in their responses by telephone.

The plans for the 2000 census are on solid legal ground, despite the rhetoric.

The Department of Justice under the Carter, Bush, and Clinton administrations has consistently ruled that the Constitution doesn't bar sampling or statistical methods to improve a good faith effort to count everyone directly.

We can listen to the experts to get the best count possible. Or we can let politics rule the day, and end up with a census that costs too much and misses millions of Americans.

We must put an end to the injustice census.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HEFLEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend a couple of minutes talking about the future of Social Security. Last Saturday there was a National town hall type discussion among citizens in 10 cities of the country linked by interactive television. The purpose was to discuss the problems of Social Security, and possible solutions. I compliment the Pew Foundation for starting this kind of discussion that I think is so vital in deciding how we make Social Security more secure. The first step is to understand what the problems are and understand the seriousness of the problems in terms of keeping Social Security solvent.

I was asked to participate with President Clinton, with both of us making statements and listening to suggestions. Speaking at Cobo Hall in Detroit I said there were certain guidelines that need to be adhered to as we move ahead on solving Social Security. Number one, that it be bipartisan; number two, that we need to keep all solutions on the table in our discussions over the next several months in looking at the best possible ways to keep Social Security solvent; number three, that we do not reduce the benefits for existing retirees or near-term retirees; number four, that we have a system where our kids and our grandkids, and their children can have retirement incomes that will last them through their expected longer life span, and; number five, that we stop government using Social Security Trust Fund money in exchange for non marketable I.O.U.s. Finally, that we have a system that is not going to be privatized, but rather a system that allows forced saving and investment in retirement accounts owned by the worker.

Let me very briefly describe some of the problems in Social Security. Right now, because it is a pay-as-you-go program, where existing taxpayers pay in their Social Security tax and immediately that tax is used to pay out benefits, to existing retirees. It is sort of a pay-as-you-go system, in effect a Ponzi scheme. When we started this program in 1935, it was easy to keep the system going because actually at that time the average age of death at birth was 61 years old. That means most people never reached the age where they would draw any benefits. They would give up what money they and their employers had put into the system. Over the years since 1935, every time there